Creating Time and Space: Depth, Simultaneity, and Tempo in Counterinsurgency

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by
MAJ Ted L. Stokes, Jr.
United States Army

School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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Counterinsurgency and unconventional war have dominated both the intellectual focus and the operational employment of the U.S. Army for the last decade, and are expected to remain a prevalent challenge for the foreseeable future. One of the primary debates surrounding this environment of unconventional warfare is how well the U.S. Army's doctrine supports, guides, and informs Army leaders to succeed in these operations. The purpose of this study was to support the relevance of current doctrine by demonstrating its applicability, when properly employed, in past counterinsurgencies. The study used select elements of operational art, namely depth, tempo, and simultaneity, as a rubric for application of operational art in two campaigns of the Vietnam War. The study found that full employment of these tenets, in planning and operations significantly increased the operational effects of the Cambodian campaign, while the campaign in Laos suffered limited success. In summation, a deeper understanding of the doctrinal tenets, and their relevance in comparison to the environment and the enemy, will continue to guide U.S. Army leaders in both conventional and unconventional operations.

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Approved by:

_____ Monograph Director
Bruce E. Stanley, Ph.D.

_____ Second Reader
Michael Schoy, COL, (GS) German Army

_____ Director,
Thomas C. Graves, COL, IN School of Advanced Military Studies

_____ Director,
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D. Graduate Degree Programs

Abstract

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Counterinsurgency and unconventional war have dominated both the intellectual focus and the operational employment of the U.S. Army for the last decade, and are expected to remain a prevalent challenge for the foreseeable future. One of the primary debates surrounding this environment of unconventional warfare is how well the U.S. Army's doctrine supports, guides, and informs Army leaders to succeed in these operations. The purpose of this study was to support the relevance of current doctrine by demonstrating its applicability, when properly employed, in past counterinsurgencies. The study used select elements of operational art, namely depth, tempo, and simultaneity, as a rubric for application of operational art in two campaigns of the Vietnam War. The study found that full employment of these tenets, in planning and operations significantly increased the operational effects of the Cambodian campaign, while the campaign in Laos suffered limited success. In summation, a deeper understanding of the doctrinal tenets, and their relevance in comparison to the environment and the enemy, will continue to guide U.S. Army leaders in both conventional and unconventional operations.

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Introduction

Background of the Study

The United States has entered its tenth year of combating terrorism and insurgency under Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, and recently concluded counterinsurgency operations in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM/NEW DAWN. Although counterinsurgency has gained popularity as a focus of discussion during these wars, both within the military and the political realms, insurgencies and counterinsurgencies have been common means of war, across the globe, throughout history.[1] The Army Posture Statement of 2010 states that, "For the near future, persistent conflict – protracted confrontation among state, non-state, and individual actors that are increasingly willing to use violence to achieve their political and ideological ends – will characterize the global security environment," indicating insurgencies will remain a threat for the foreseeable future.[2] Further, a RAND study titled "War by Other Means," states that globalization will expand the use of insurgency, by organizations and ideologies other than "militant Islam," throughout the future.[3] Accepting this prediction, is the U.S. Army doctrinally prepared to counter insurgencies in the future? Does the U.S. counterinsurgency theory full enable us to meet

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[1] U.S. Army, *Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Agency, 2006), 1-3.

[2] Department of the Army, *2010 Army Posture Statement*, https://secureweb2.hqda.pentagon.mil/VDAS_ArmyPostureStatement/2010/2010_army_posture_statement.pdf accessed on 21 August, 2011.

[3] David C Gompert, and John Gordon, *War by Other Means: Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency*, Rand Counterinsurgency Study (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp., 2008), 14.

the challenges of future conflicts? Some, such as Majors (MAJ) Lee Grubbs and Michael Forsyth, veterans of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM, would say no.[4]

Apparent in the article by MAJ Grubbs, a perceived crisis exists in the confidence of current U.S. Army doctrine to fully and successfully prosecute counterinsurgency. Further, the rate of changes and updates to doctrine, in the last five years, has further eroded this confidence across a portion of the force.[5] To specifically address counterinsurgency operations, referred to in common Army parlance by the acronym COIN, the Army published a new doctrinal manual, *Field Manual 3-24 Counterinsurgency,* in 2006. A review of *FM 3-24* reveals a publication that is highly theoretical in nature and a considerable departure from its contemporary publications. Further, *FM 3-24* fails to incorporate, reference, or mention operational art, the seminal theoretical basis for Army operations, and the key bridge that delineates the nesting of tactical actions to strategic aims.[6] This potential doctrinal disparity further exasperates a potential for U.S. Army planners and leaders to lose confidence in its doctrine, which could undermine the Army's corporate knowledge and standardization that these publications provide.

The purpose of this study is to engage mid- and senior- level planners and leaders in the Army, in an attempt to convey the continued relevance of our doctrinal tenets. In spite of the

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[4] Lee K. Grubbs, and Michael J. Forsyth, "Is There a Deep Fight in a Counterinsurgency?," *Military Review* LXXXV, no. 4 (2005). In this article, two officers, with recent counterinsurgent experience in Afghanistan, discuss the preparedness of U.S. Army Doctrine to support, plan, and conduct counterinsurgent operations, particularly in reference to deep operations.

[5] As an example of this rapid change, during the writing of this monograph the U.S. Army published *Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0, Unified Land Operations*, only a year after releasing its newest update to *FM 3-0 Operations.* ADP 3-0 represents the first publication of a wholesale restructuring of the doctrinal structure within the U.S. Army, which will includes tiered publications of Army Doctrinal Publications, Army Doctrinal Reference Publications, and Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures.

[6] U.S. Army, *Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0, Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), 9.

rapid tempo of recent doctrinal changes and updates, and the new and unfamiliar doctrinal structure created under the Army Doctrinal Publication rubric, the underpinning definitions and employment still remain valid. Secondly, this study endeavors to correct any misconceptions that current Army doctrine is not sufficient, applicable, or effective for use in counterinsurgency operations. While the conduct of these operations is extremely different from conventional operations, this same doctrine, applied with a fuller and broader understanding, supports both successfully.

This study employs the theoretical framework of operational art to guide the investigation of employment of doctrinal tenets in counterinsurgent operations. As defined by *Field Manual 3-0, Change 1*, operational art is, "the application of creative imagination by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, and experience—to design strategies, campaigns, and major operations and organize and employ military forces. Operational art integrates ends, ways, and means across the levels of war."[7] Operational art is the methodology by which planners and commanders understand, visualize, decide, direct, assess, and lead military operations.[8] The operations process achieves this through the employment of primary tenets which maintain flexibility, guide action, synchronize maneuver, seize the initiative, and mitigate risk. Although this framework pervades current Army doctrine, *FM 3-24* fails to reference it a single time throughout the entirety of the manual. This omission infers, to students of counterinsurgency, that operational art is not required for success in unconventional war. Using select tenets of operational art, this paper endeavors to correct this misconception.

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[7] U.S. Army, *Field Manual 3-0, Operations, Change 1* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2010), Glossary-11.

[8] Ibid., 5-3.

To guide research throughout this study, a set of five research questions will be employed to determine the use of elements of operational art in past counterinsurgent campaigns. Three of the questions will determine the use of three specific elements; depth, tempo, and simultaneity. This study selected these particular tenets due to the disparity of their usage between conventional military and insurgent operations. The final two questions, identifying the seizure or loss of the initiative and the achievement of operational effects, will provide a rubric for adjudication of campaign effectiveness. The questions used in this study are:

1. Did the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces employ depth in the campaign?
2. Did the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces incorporate simultaneity into the campaign?
3. Did the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces establish or maintain tempo during the campaign?
4. Did the U.S. and South Vietnam forces seize or retain the initiative as a result of the campaign?
5. Did the campaign degrade NVA and VC capabilities and achieve the desired operational effects?

The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the presented counterinsurgent campaigns, based on the incorporation of depth, simultaneity, and tempo, will explicate the applicability of the broader framework of operational art in counterinsurgency. Based on this goal, the thesis for this study states that military operations employing the elements of depth, simultaneity, and tempo, enable counterinsurgent forces to disrupt the tempo of insurgent operations, thus providing time and space for the training, development, and fielding of host nation security forces.

This study faces three primary limitations; classification of contemporary practical examples, availability of opposing perspectives on the presented case studies, and the scope and breadth of the Cambodian campaign of 1970. The first limitation deals with the security

classification of information, which prevents the inclusion of a comprehensive discussion of recent counterinsurgent campaigns conducted as part of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM. To ensure widest release and analysis of this work, all information contained within, as well as all reference material used in the compilation of this effort, is unclassified. Thus, the most current examples of U.S. counterinsurgencies, and any evaluations thereof, are omitted. While this may seem to limit immediate application and relevance, in truth the lessons and information on these wars has yet to be sufficiently compiled, categorized, or sufficiently studied. The second limitation deals with the two case studies from the Vietnam War selected for analysis. An attempt to mitigate bias in perspective led to research efforts considering North Vietnamese, senior military assessments of the two campaigns. By the nature of the authoritarian regime in North Vietnam and the lack of available, translated publications, this attempt failed. Thus, analysis of these campaigns draws solely on historical and contemporary publications of both American and South Vietnamese origin. The final limitation deals with the scope and breadth of the campaign in Cambodia. In sum, the campaign involved three separate, subordinate campaigns, Operations TOAN THANG in the III Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ), BINH TAY in the II CTZ, and CUU LONG in the IV CTZ.[9] For the purpose of brevity and simplicity, this paper will consider only Operation TOAN THANG, however, in the aggregate, the concurrent execution of these three campaigns translated to increased simultaneity across a majority of the South Vietnam area of operations, and would add additional justification to the premise of this study's argument.

[9] John M. Shaw, *The Cambodian Campaign: The 1970 Offensive and America's Vietnam War*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 6.

This study is composed of five sections; an Introduction, a Literature Review, a Methodology, a Case Studies, and a Conclusion. The Introduction sets the conditions, limitations, and background for the study, while formalizing the hypothesis and the questions that aim to validate or invalidate it. The Literature Review discusses the current stance of counterinsurgency theory and doctrine within the U.S. Army, through consideration of the primary viewpoints, schools of thought, and identification of prominent and relevant publications on counterinsurgency theory and the evolution of operational art. Additionally, the section defines the primary elements of operational art relevant to the study and provides ancillary definitions for consideration. The Methodology section explains the relevance of the Vietnam case studies, drawing comparisons and similarities to the counterinsurgencies of the present. Furthermore, it outlines the instrumentation and criteria of the case study analysis. This section closes by identifying the classification of resources that contribute to the study, as a whole. The Case Study Section has three parts. Part one provides a general review of Vietnam's martial history leading up to the Vietnam War. Parts two and three provide a general overview of each campaign, followed by an analysis to extract the primary information that will apply to the study's hypothesis. The final section, Conclusion, provides a comparison of the data from both case studies, analyzes the data for application and inference, and closes the paper with a consideration of the method issues, policy implications, and areas requiring future research.

The basic premise of this study is to assert the relevance of operational art in counterinsurgency operations and, in particular, highlight the importance of depth, simultaneity, and tempo in creating the operational effects to disrupt insurgent tempo and operations. A historical review of past efforts will refute or deny this claim, strengthening the confidence of current Army planners and leaders in contemporary doctrine. If supported, this study will demonstrate that an ability to create effects against an insurgency's tempo and structure will

contribute to the U.S. Army's ability to prepare the force and its Soldiers for the most likely wars it will face in the future.

Literature Review

Introduction

This section introduces a discussion of the primary literature involved in the development of current U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine and the rationale for the inclusion of past U.S. doctrine as a means of success against the insurgency in Afghanistan.

Intellectual discussion and debate within the U.S. military, since 2001, has centered on counterinsurgency. Counterinsurgency is not a new challenge for the United States or the U.S. Army. In fact, since the founding of the nation, the Army has spent more time conducting the "myriads of operations other than war" than it has major combat operations.[10] Although the names and terminology associated with these types of operations have changed constantly, ranging from Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) to Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), the Army's requirements for involvement and success have not. The current counterinsurgency in Afghanistan falls directly into this category. Unfortunately, the U.S. Army and the Department of Defense, in general, have not succeeded in retaining the concepts, doctrine, and lessons learned of these past operations, preferring to maintain focus on its competencies in major combat operations. Further, theorists like Andrew Krepinevich have stated that "insurgents have their own set of principles, maxims, or 'rules,'" and to prevail against them the U.S. must depart from

[10] A. J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860-1941* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1998), 3.

its conventional doctrine and develop a new approach that attacks the insurgent "at the source of his strength: the population."[11]

Counterinsurgency Theory and Doctrine

Identifying what it perceived as a shortcoming in coherent doctrine guiding counterinsurgent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. Army underwent a steep learning curve from 2004 – 2008, with the publication, fielding, and implementation of new counterinsurgency doctrine, namely *Field Manual 3-24 Counterinsurgency.* This new manual, the initial chapters of which read more as theory than doctrine, focuses on a "population-centric" approach to counterinsurgency by engaging, securing, and building the confidence of the host nation population. This approach specifically focuses on the population, the center of gravity for both the host nation government and the insurgent forces.[12] While it does not rule out kinetic operations and lethal targeting of insurgents, it subordinates these operations to those that are focused on the safety and security of the population.

This manual received mixed acceptance, meeting resistance from senior Army leaders who believed that a focus on counterinsurgency degraded the Army's major combat competencies and threatened the Army's ability to fight the next war.[13] These leaders also felt that this "new" mission would require new military theories and significant force restructure to be executable.

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[11] Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 10.

[12] James S. Corum, *Fighting the War on Terror: A Counterinsurgency Strategy* (St. Paul, Minn.: Zenith Press, 2007), 162. Corum references Max Manwaring, a top counterinsurgency theorist, who argues that in the case of revolution or revolt both the insurgency and the government have the same center of gravity: the support of the local populace.

[13] David H. Ucko, *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 134-36.

Ultimately, this division led to a polarization of the different camps, with Dr. John A Nagl, contributor to the new *FM 3-24*, and a number of military and academic intellectuals who supported his theory, earning the moniker of the "COIN Community."[14]

Other schools of thought have evolved that arguing that population-centric strategies surrender opportunities to neutralize or defeat insurgencies kinetically, when practical. Included in this school is Colonel(Retired) Gian Gentile, a former battalion commander in Iraq and current Professor of History at the United States Military Academy, who states "sometimes the best approach to dealing with a problem of insurgency is not necessarily a focus on the people per se, but on the insurgent enemy."[15] In addition to support for enemy-centric approaches to counterinsurgency, Gentile also supports the view of a counterinsurgency focus atrophying combat skills across the force.[16] These polarized views of population-centric versus enemy-centric approaches are indicative of an intellectual tug of war, both within and outside of the Army, which has elevated to the level of naming its constituents – the "COINtras" versus the "COINdinistas." This intellectual conflict remains just as polarized today.[17] Ultimately, this disagreement has garnered an opinion of distrust in the doctrine and theory that the Army employs today to fight insurgency.

One of the primary challenges to effective counterinsurgency operations is the incompatibility of *FM 3-24* with the U.S. Army's current doctrinal template for creating and

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[14] Ibid., 78.

[15] Gian P. Gentile, "Let's Build an Army to Win All Wars," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 1st Quarter 2009, no. 52 (2009): 31.

[16] Ibid., 31.

[17] Christopher Paul, and Paul P. Clark, "Evidentiary Validation of FM 3–24 Counterinsurgency Worldwide 1978–2008," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 60 (2011): 126-28. This article exhibits the continuing argument between the two approach camps.

executing operations, operational art theory. Units at all levels across the Army, employ operational art as a mainstay for planning and execution of combat operations. As counterinsurgencies often develop at the conclusion of major combat operations, as was the case in Iraq in 2003, a unified theory and doctrine covering the full spectrum of conflict is required.[18] Ceasing one theoretical approach, in this case operational art, to employ a second, counterinsurgency theory, presents a complex and difficult transition in an already difficult security environment.

This study proposes that the U.S. Army has current and past doctrine, which in conjunction with the current concepts contained in *FM 3-24*, presents an efficient and effective means of fighting insurgencies, while training host nation security forces and securing a country's population. The overarching military theories most relative to this hypothesis are deep attack, as published in U.S. Army doctrine in 1982, and operational art, as currently practiced by the U.S. Army. [19] While linked through doctrinal evolution, the two theories share common tenets which could provide the Army with a means of developing refined strategies to produce success, not only in Afghanistan, but also in future conflicts.

The 1986 edition of *FM 100-5, Operations*, introduced deep battle theory, a component of AirLand Battle, as the U.S. Army's answer to the threat of a European ground war against the Soviet Union. Due to the size and overmatch of Soviet military forces, in comparison to the

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[18] U.S. Army, *Field Manual 5-0, The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2010), 1-2.Although the term "full spectrum operations" has recently been written out of U.S. Army doctrine, it serves as a simple and clear definition of a range of potential military operations ranging from peace operations to major combat operations.

[19] U.S. Army, *Field Manual 100-5, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1982), 7-2. The 1982 edition of FM 100-5 introduced the concept of deep operations as Deep Attack, a component of AirLand Battle. In 1986, the term was changed to Deep Battle, however the doctrinal concept of deep operations conducted as a component of AirLand Battle remained the same.

smaller, forward-deployed U.S. force, the Army searched for a means to minimize the Soviet numerical advantages and enhance U.S. battlefield capabilities. Employing the theories of deep attack, initially developed by G.S. Isserson and other Soviet military theorists during the Second World War, the U.S. Army designed a means to attack successive echelons of enemy forces, concurrently, to provide time and space for reinforcement and maneuver. Deep attacks would not only attrit reserve forces, prior to commitment to frontline positions, but would also cripple command and control and logistical enablers, thereby further degrading the capabilities of lead combat elements. According to Dr. James Schneider, this would induce operational shock, throughout the enemy formation.[20] This shock would desynchronize the enemy formations and battle plans. Thus, with the destruction of the lead echelon forces, subsequent echelons are disrupted and incapable of reinforcement or support. This premise was further expounded by BG(R) Shimon Naveh, one of the leading operational theorists of the modern era, who theorized that operational shock on an enemy system or organization would neutralize the "rival system's ability to perform its missions" through loss of momentum and deep fragmentation.[21]

Deep battle remained an integral part of U.S. military planning until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, when the U.S. no longer faced a peer competitor in its ability to project massive military power. As the U.S. transitioned to a position of global military dominance, it incorporated depth as a tenet of Army operations, a means of both engaging enemy forces and

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[20] James J. Schneider, "A New Form of Warfare," *Military Review* LXXXX, no. 1 (2000): 60. Schneider's article discusses "cybernetic stupor" forced on an enemy's organization's "nervous system"; For a discussion of shock in a contemporary, tactical discussion see, Grubbs, "Is There a Deep Fight in a Counterinsurgency?," 28.

[21] Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory*, The Cummings Center Series, (London ; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997), 190.

gathering intelligence and information throughout the depth of the battlespace.[22] Depth, paired with simultaneity, remained in current U.S. Army doctrine as an element of operational art, but has been upgraded to a tenet for all unified land operations, with the publication of *Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0, Unified Land Operations*.[23]

The birth of operational art marked the beginning of the transformation of warfare from classical strategy, where smaller armies fought single, decisive battles, to modern warfare, where exponentially larger armies fight multiple battles across huge fronts. Unable to defeat these mass armies in single engagements, military theorists developed new theories and means to wage war, under contemporary conditions, linking continuous and consecutive tactical actions to the achievement of strategic endstates. In essence, the tenets of operational art created tactical advantages, supporting victory in the local engagement, while setting the conditions for following battles, through synchronization and consideration of time and space.

Current U.S. Army doctrine defines the elements of operational art as "a set of intellectual tools" to assist commanders and staffs to "think through understanding the operational environment as well as visualizing and describing the operational approach."[24] Employing these "tools," listed in Figure 1, planners and commanders can analyze enemy forces and organizations, identifying vulnerabilities and opportunities, while synchronizing friendly operations to maximize effects. In essence, custom tailoring a series of operations to match the timing, synchronization,

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[22] U.S. Army, *Field Manual 100-5, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1993), 2-6.

[23] U.S. Army, *Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0, Unified Land Operations*, 8-9.

[24] U.S. Army, *Field Manual 3-0, Operations, Change 1*, 7-5.

and focus of the friendly forces' capabilities to overcome the enemy's operational vulnerabilities, while ensuring all efforts remain ultimately oriented on a unified endstate.

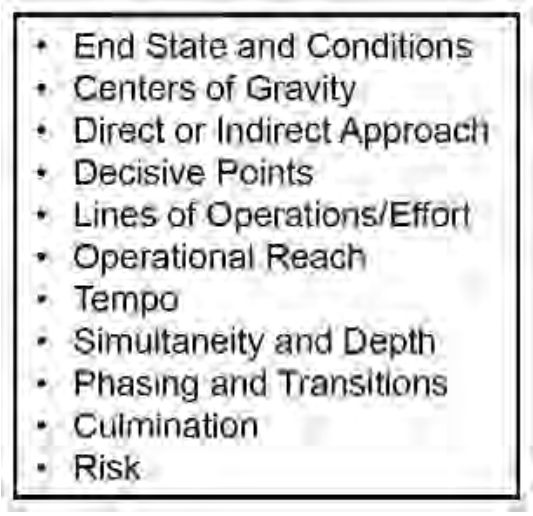

Figure 1: Elements of Operational Art[25]

Conceptual Clarity and Understanding

Central to understanding these theories are some key concepts and definitions that require clarification and elaboration. The following definitions employ both doctrinal and non-doctrinal references to clarify meaning and intent. Prior to in-depth discussion and usage, the terms of depth, simultaneity, tempo, operational effects, and initiative must be defined. The following definitions serve as standards throughout the remainder of this work.

Depth, doctrinally defined, is the "extension of operations in time, space, and resources."[26] The intent for the employment of depth is to attrit or destroy an enemy's forces or

[25] Ibid., 7-5.

[26] Ibid., Glossary-5.

resources before the enemy can employ them against friendly forces.[27] Attacks in depth typically involve physical distances, which typically relate to extension into multiple echelons of enemy formations. As an example, Soviet military theorists employed depth in the creation of "shock armies," a specialized formation built around the capability to achieve deep penetrations and destroy second echelon forces and operational reserves.[28] However, depth can exceed the physical planes, involving operations throughout the hierarchy of an organization for instance, which exceed the singular understanding of physical distance. This study employs the broader definition of depth and aims to articulate its optimized employment.

Simultaneity is the capacity to conduct multiple operations in time and space concurrently. Simultaneous operation implies the capability to integrate multiple operations, concurrently, so that their timing and synchronization multiplies their effectiveness.[29] *FM 3-0, Change 1* defines simultaneity, in conjunction with depth, due to the "vast areas" across which simultaneous operations are conducted.[30] For the purpose of this study, the definition of simultaneity does not constitute operations that start or end at precisely the same time, but rather operations conducted within temporal ranges, which disrupt or degrade the enemy's capability to counter with maximum forces possible. Simultaneity, like depth, is not restricted to the physical plane, but can also incorporate concurrent actions across multiple domains, to include geographic,

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[27] Ibid., 7-14.

[28] Richard W. Harrison, *Architect of Soviet Victory in World War II: The Life and Theories of G.S. Isserson* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2010), 190.

[29] U.S. Army, *Field Manual 3-0, Operations, Change 1*, 7-14.

[30] Ibid., 7-14.

structural, or organizational. Again, it is this broader definition of simultaneity that supports this study.

Tempo, as per doctrine, is "the relative speed and rhythm of military operations over time with respect to the enemy."[31] Many practitioners commonly misconstrue this definition as purely speed of movement. They fail to grasp the importance of the term's deeper meaning. For this reason, in this work we will expand on this commonly misunderstood definition to a fuller, but non-doctrinal, definition of tempo to include frequency. Robert Leonhard defines frequency as the number of "military events per unit of time'.[32] This addition to the standard definition allows planners to identify a normal, or expected, frequency to be associated with an individual organization or system. Figure 2 reflects a normal frequency pattern.

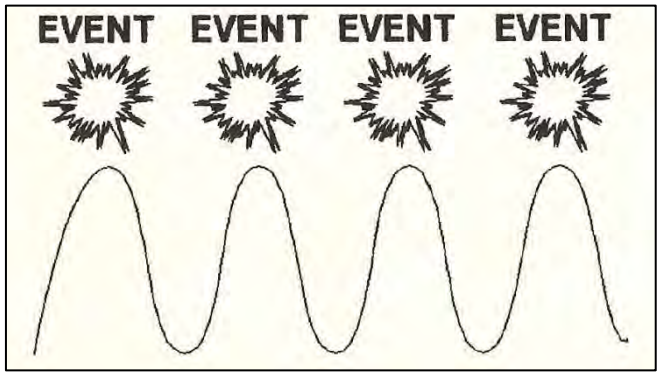

Figure 2: Normal Frequency[33]

By the nature of insurgency, Leonhard explains that insurgent organizations typically have a slower frequency or tempo; allowing them to be extremely selective of targets and attacks,

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[31] Ibid., Glossary-15.

[32] Robert R. Leonhard, *Fighting by Minutes: Time and the Art of War* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1994), 69.

[33] Ibid., 72.

maintain the element of surprise, and leverage complacency of counterinsurgent forces.[34] Figure 3 depicts a graphic example of the effects of a high frequency campaign on an insurgent's low frequency tempo.

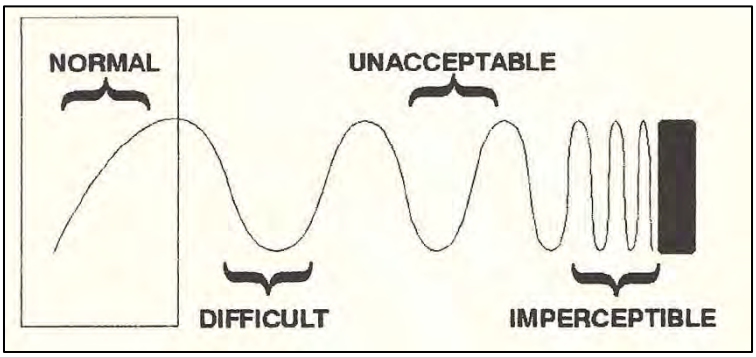

Figure 3: Normal Frequency[35]

As evident above, an increase in an insurgent's frequency, through an escalation of counterinsurgent tempo, induces friction into the insurgent's decision and operation cycles. In essence, the counterinsurgent's higher tempo and rhythm of operations overwhelms the tempo of the insurgent. Throughout this paper, Leonhard's definition of frequency will be included into the understanding of tempo when considering both insurgent and counterinsurgent operations.

Operational effects, as used in this study, are more difficult to clearly understand as there is no doctrinal definition for the term. However, it exists in wide use across the Army. A basis for understanding comes from a School of Advanced Military Studies monograph by Major Gary Petrole, titled "Understanding the Operational Effect."[36] Petrole argues that "an operational effect

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[34] Ibid., 87.

[35] Ibid., 74.

[36] Gary P. Petrole, "Understanding the Operational Effect" (Command and General Staff College, 1991).

is a consequence of actions which creates an impression or impact in our opponent… (They) influence his subsequent actions and result in a particular outcome."[37] This definition fits, precisely, the intent for this study – to assess the impact of friendly operations in relation to an enemy's actions. Further clarification of the term would be to consider the conditions emplaced on an enemy force that are present, as a result of friendly operations, which are conducive to the achievement of a campaign's operational endstate.

The final definition requiring clarification is initiative. Initiative, doctrinally defined, is "setting or dictating the terms of action throughout the battle or operation."[38] A broadly accepted understanding is that the first belligerent, in a conventional conflict, to employ force seizes the initiative and endeavors to retain it throughout the conflict. However, David Galula, in his book *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, expands on the idea of initiative by arguing that due to the secretive and unapparent intentions of insurgents, they possess, from the outset, the initiative.[39] He further argues that insurgents achieve this whether they are the first to employ violence and direct conflict or not. This study will use the broader definition of initiative, as provided by Galula, for consideration throughout this effort.

The remainder of this work will focus on these three elements of operational art, and their criticality to the execution of counterinsurgency. Military planners should continuously work toward incorporation and synchronization of the full complement of the elements of operational art, understanding their definitions and means of employment in counterinsurgent operations.

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[37] Ibid., 19.

[38] U.S. Army, *Field Manual 1-02, Operational Terms and Graphics* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2004), 1-100.

[39] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare; Theory and Practice* (New York: Praeger, 1964), 3.

This formulates a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of their contribution to current operational doctrine.

Conclusion

Although not a new arrival to the Army's range of possible conflict, counterinsurgency has set the groundwork for the creation of new doctrine and schools of military thought. While intellectual investigation is critical in maintaining adaptive and learning organizations, outright dismissal of current and past military doctrine and theory, without investigation of merit and worth, could subject these same organizations to continuous change and friction. As we find throughout history, new methods of warfare do not always require new tools to successfully wage it.

Methodology

The primary goal of this work is to test the hypothesis that the employment of tenets of current and past doctrine, namely depth, simultaneity and tempo from operational art, can create the time and space required for counterinsurgent forces in Afghanistan to train host nation security forces, by desynchronizing and disrupting insurgent operations. This section outlines the methodology employed to test this hypothesis, using qualitative analysis. Due to the ambiguity of theoretical construction and the immeasurability of its tenets, subjective evaluation (yes or no answers) will be assessed during consideration. This section is composed of four subsections detailing selection of significant cases, criteria assessment, data collection, and a summary.

Selection of Significant Cases

The two case studies examined by this monograph are separate campaigns during the American war in Vietnam; the cross-border campaign into Cambodia in 1970, and Operation LAM SON 719 into Laos in 1971. These case studies were selected due to their close similarities

to the ongoing insurgency in Afghanistan. From a strategic perspective, both the Vietcong insurgency and the Taliban represent hybrid threats, defined as "diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, terrorist forces, criminal elements, or a combination of these forces and elements all unified to achieve mutually benefitting effects."[40] Likewise, both insurgencies utilize transnational sanctuary to maintain operational depth and freedom of maneuver, and both oppose a superior military power, forcing them to pursue a termination by political defeat of national will vice defeat through military might.[41] Finally, both insurgencies have similar strategic endstates, liberation of their country and the establishment of a new political and social order.[42]

In addition to the similarities of the two insurgencies, there exist several similarities in the American, geopolitical environments of both the Vietnam and Afghanistan War periods. Although possessing significant technological and military overmatch, the U.S. struggled, in both conflicts, with the national will to pursue wars of prolonged duration, a typical characteristic of insurgent warfare. Additionally, in both cases the U.S., having recently won major combat operations preceding both insurgencies, focused on conventional warfare and struggled with the application of counterinsurgency doctrine and theory. [43]

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[40] U.S. Army, *Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0, Unified Land Operations*, 4.

[41] Thomas A. Bruscino, *Out of Bounds: Transnational Sanctuary in Irregular Warfare*, Global War on Terrorism Occasional Paper 17 (Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), 1-8. Bruscino discusses the challenges associated with sanctuary and international borders that are inherent in counterinsurgent and counter-terror operations.

[42] Jeffrey Record, *Beating Goliath: Why Insurgencies Win*, 1st ed. (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007), 68. While the Vietcong pursed a purely political goal for a communist South Vietnam, the Taliban pursue a theocratic goal of a radical Islamic, central government and enforcement of Sharia law.

[43] The conventional wars referred to in this sentence are the Korean War, which preceded the war in Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf War, which preceded Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.

The substantial parallels between the Vietcong and the Taliban insurgencies are not only indicative of suitable case studies for this monograph, but are also important to the continued study of American counterinsurgency doctrine. As a hegemonic power, possessing unmatched military resources, potential future opponents may employ similar strategies to combat U.S. strengths and target likely vulnerabilities. Employing transnational sanctuary to limit U.S. operational reach and targeting the political will of the nation, are but a few of the likely strategies they may employ. We find evidence of this with the public statements by Osama bin Laden and his lieutenant, Ayman al Zawahiri, in 1996 and 2001 respectively, admitting to studying not only America's challenges in the Vietnam War, but also its perceived defeats in Lebanon, Somalia, and the bombing of the USS Cole in Aden.[44]

Criteria for Instrumentation of Case Study Evaluation

This subsection describes the instrumentation by which this paper evaluates the application of depth, simultaneity, and tempo against the Vietcong in the two selected case studies. To set the conditions for the assessment, this paper opens the case studies with a brief martial history of Vietnam, from its inception to 1968. This review establishes the conditions that were present in theater that lead to the requirement for counterinsurgent operations. Each case study will be assessed to confirm or deny the employment of depth, simultaneity, and tempo, throughout the campaign, and will consider each element's contribution, or in the case of its absence, lack of contribution to the success of the campaign overall. Due to the difficulty of quantitatively measuring theoretical tenets, this evaluation will confirm or deny their

[44] Record, *Beating Goliath: Why Insurgencies Win*, 21.

incorporation and usage and attempt to identify the associated effects on the each campaign's outcome. Finally, the two cases will be compared to assess the employment of the three operational tenets in a counterinsurgent strategy.

Data Collection

Historical texts, battle summaries, doctrine, and professional military journals provide the data for analysis of this study. Historical texts and battle summaries will inform on the environmental conditions, planning, and execution of the campaigns, as well as assessing their success. Multiple texts and summaries, for each campaign, provide for historical accuracy. Doctrine and military journals provide an account of the organizational understanding and doctrinal development of the period. The personal statements and opinions of strategic leaders of the period, as published in biographies and historical texts, provide insights to of the effectiveness of the campaigns.

Conclusion

This section outlined the construct of this study's methodology, nested with the study's overarching purpose. This methodological approach pursues two primary efforts. The first effort identifies the environmental conditions that required the implementation of depth, simultaneity, and tempo to seize the operational initiative. Secondly, the summary assesses each campaign individually to identify their employment of depth, simultaneity, and tempo, in both planning and execution, to achieve the operational endstate.

Case Studies

Introduction

This study used George and Bennett's s structured, focused comparison method to examine the employment of depth, tempo, and simultaneity in two separate campaigns of the

Vietnam War.[45] This method is structured in that the analysis of the case studies is conducted through a set of guiding questions. The method employs focus as it analyzes only two campaigns, and specifically, the employment of these tenets within them. This section opens with an introduction to the questions used to review the cases. The questions used in these case studies are:

1. Did the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces employ depth in the campaign?
2. Did the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces incorporate simultaneity into the campaign?
3. Did the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces establish or maintain tempo during the campaign?
4. Did the U.S. and South Vietnam forces seize or retain the initiative as a result of the campaign?
5. Did the campaign degrade NVA and VC capabilities and achieve the desired operational effects?

Following an overview of each campaign, the questions assess the level of incorporation of these tenets of operational art and extrapolate their effectiveness toward achieving the desired operational effects. This analysis provides insight to support or refute the importance of depth, simultaneity, tempo, and initiative in counterinsurgency operations.

The Vietnam War presents an excellent case study in which to explore the arguments of this paper. In the 1960's, the U.S. Army focused on wars involving conventional combat operations. Additionally, the U.S. Army faced both a conventional enemy in the North

[45] Alexander L. George, and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, BCSIA Studies in International Security (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), 67-72.

Vietnamese Army (NVA) and an unconventional force in the Viet Cong (VC), who employed guerilla tactics, conducted decentralized operations, and was critically dependent on a line of communication (LOC) which was outside the operational reach of its enemy. [46] In Vietnam, as in the current struggle in Afghanistan, the primary LOCs extend across an international border providing sanctuary to insurgent forces. [47] In both wars, the U.S. faced the struggle of developing a host nation security force while simultaneously conducting combat operations.

This resource uses two case studies to assess two conventional military operations, one into Cambodia in March of 1970, and one into Laos in February of 1971. They analyze the employment of depth, simultaneity, tempo, and initiative to create time and space to facilitate security force development. To set the stage for a detailed assessment of the two campaigns, this paper provides a concise overview of the martial history of Vietnam and the conduct of the Vietnam War.

The Genesis of the Vietnam War

Throughout Vietnam's history, it has been at war. Based on the military capabilities and the superior size of its historical opponents, Vietnam, formerly named Indochina, formulated a concept of warfare that heavily incorporated insurgent tactics. As a southern province of China, Indochina struggled for hundreds of years to gain liberation and independence from its larger continental neighbor. In the 1300s, Indochina defended itself against the Mongols of Kublai

[46] U.S. Army, *Field Manual 1-02, Operational Terms and Graphics*, 1-113.

[47] For more information on the use of transnational sanctuary, and the issues associated with operations against them see, Bruscino, *Out of Bounds: Transnational Sanctuary in Irregular Warfare*.

Khan, taking advantage of its harsh terrain and climate to defeat three separate invasions.[48] In 1426, Indochina finally won its independence from China, but continuously struggled with internal security and civil war until 1883, when the French imposed peace and established Indochina as a French Protectorate under the Treaty of Hue.[49] In 1941, the Japanese seized Indochina from the French, continuing its long history of conflict, and once again presenting it with a militarily advanced opponent.[50] The birth of the Viet Minh, a Communist insurgency led by Ho Chi Minh, countered this threat. Faced again with the challenge of opposing a superior military power, the Viet Minh employed insurgent tactics, perfected through a history of warfare, and strongly influenced by the Chinese models of Mao Zedong.[51]

France attempted to reinstate its colonial holdings in Indochina and reoccupy the country after the defeat of the Japanese at the end of World War II. The Viet Minh, having fought against the Japanese, continued the fight for independence against the French in what became the First Indochina War.[52] Although initially neutral in this long-running conflict, the collapse of the Nationalist Chinese government in 1949, the initiation of war in Korea in 1950, and the beginnings of the American strategy of Communist containment fostered the U.S. assessment that

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[48] Robert A. Doughty, *Warfare in the Western World*, 2 vols. (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1996), 902.

[49] Henry McAleavy, *Black Flags in Vietnam; The Story of a Chinese Intervention*, 1st American ed. (New York,: Macmillan, 1968), 213-15.

[50] Doughty, *Warfare in the Western World*, 903. Throughout most of its martial history, Vietnam faced larger and more militarily advanced opponents, particularly China. As such, Vietnam developed a mindset of employing cleverness and ingenuity to counter the military might of their enemies.

[51] Ibid., 903.

[52] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 19.

Indochina was "the key to Southeast Asia."[53] The importance of countering Communism in the region led the U.S. to side with the French in the struggle. American participation initially involved the creation of the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), which grew from a staff of four in 1950 to 342 by 1954.[54] Despite American support, the war came to a close with the defeat of a large, conventional French force at Dien Bien Phu and the pursuit of peace negotiations in Geneva. One primary outcome of the Geneva Accords was the separation of Indochina into four separate countries; Laos, Cambodia, South Vietnam, and the communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV).[55] Earlier involvement in the war, and continued efforts toward containment, encouraged the U.S. to pursue direct support of South Vietnam to counter Communism in Southeast Asia, thereby aligning itself against the DRV, who pursued an insurgent war aimed at unifying North and South Vietnam.

Advisory Years

America's direct intervention in support of the South Vietnamese began the Second Indochinese War, better known in the U.S. as the Vietnam War. Based on the experiences of the Korean War and the organization and doctrine of the U.S. Army, the Department of Defense (DOD) pursued a conventional approach to the conflict, employing American military advisors to develop and train the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).[56] Although other government efforts met with notable success, such as the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) Strategic

[53] Ibid., 18. This viewpoint is attributed to the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, but parallels the beliefs of the U.S. strategic leaders of the period.

[54] Ibid., 18.

[55] Ibid., 19.

[56] Ibid., 8-10.

Hamlet program of Buon Enao in 1961, U.S. military leaders maintained a conventional focus to counter the growing insurgency within South Vietnam.[57] This struggle between the counterinsurgent and conventional approach continued throughout the Vietnam War and established a polarity of reporting and assessment that existed at the operational and strategic levels.[58]

To support the fielding and training requirements of the ARVN force, structured for an end strength of 170,000 in 1961, the U.S. had to significantly increase the number of military service members deployed to Vietnam; deploying in excess of 3,000 service members by 1962.[59] To command this larger force, and facilitate improved mentorship with the Vietnamese leadership, the U.S. established a new headquarters, the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV).[60] MACV, much like the MAAG, continued the pursuit of limited war, employing ARVN forces in large scale, mobile, offensive operations to defeat insurgents operating in South Vietnam. To further support the ARVN capabilities, the U.S. deployed considerable helicopter and air force units, providing additional mobility and lethality. The focus for operations was to target VC strongholds, engaging forces in direct battle, and employ aerial fires to ensure their

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[57] Ibid., 70-71. Although the CIA, employing U.S. Special Forces, met with significant success in the Buon Enao Region, the DOD disagreed with the employment of counterinsurgency techniques and politically maneuvered to pull the Special Forces elements back under DOD control, in essence terminating the successful operations. Krepinevich refers to the conventional approach of mobility and firepower, preferred by the Army leaders, as the "Army Concept."

[58] Ibid., 196-205. Krepinevich explains the aspects of the war that led to "body counts" as the primary criteria the U.S. Army was using to measure the success of the counterinsurgency for the Department of Defense. Robert Doughty references the Strategic Hamlet program, which focused on the establishment of schools and medical services and the conduct of elections and land reforms that were the focus of President Kennedy's counterinsurgency program in Doughty, *Warfare in the Western World*, 910-11.

[59] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 58.

[60] Ibid., 64.

destruction. Insurgent forces primarily countered this effort by avoiding decisive, direct battles and employing speed and stealth to protect their units from U.S. air attacks. In the battle of Ap Bac in 1963, however, a battalion-sized, VC force conducted a deliberate defense against three South Vietnamese battalions with armor support.[61] According to Krepinevich, the VC battalion, in a full day of fighting, killed over 200 South Vietnamese soldiers and shot down 5 helicopters before disengaging under the cover of darkness. From this, Krepinevich asserts that this failure to win decisively in a pitched battle eroded the confidence of senior U.S. leaders, generated questions about U.S. strategy, and significantly damaged any American claims to success in the Vietnamese advisory effort thus far.

In addition to the failure at Ap Bac, several other events occurred in 1963 that would lead the U.S. to modify its approach in Vietnam. In November, Ngo Dinh Diem, the South Vietnamese President, and President John F. Kennedy, both supporters of counterinsurgent approaches to success in Vietnam, were assassinated. The loss of these two strategic leaders, as well as the fractured confidence between Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and the senior military leaders of the Department of Defense, set the conditions for a change in the American strategy in Vietnam.[62] North Vietnamese attacks on U.S. vessels in the Gulf of Tonkin, in 1964, further exacerbated the strategic environment and set the conditions for increased American involvement in Vietnam by rallying Congressional support and expanding the authorities of the President to commit U.S. military assets.[63]

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[61] Ibid., 78-79.

[62] Ibid., 90.

[63] Ibid., 95. The attacks in the Gulf of Tonkin resulted in the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, a nearly unanimous Congressional resolution, which broadened the President's options of a larger military

Intervention Years

President Diem's assassination, the weakening of the Vietnamese central government, identified corruption within the South Vietnamese army, and uncontested insurgent control of key areas of South Vietnam all contributed to limited success for a purely South Vietnamese approach to defeating the North Vietnamese insurgency. The new U.S. President, Lyndon Johnson, saw little choice but to escalate America's involvement in Vietnam to what amounted to "a decision for full-scale war."[64] This new approach to the war required a new operational approach, and a larger commitment of U.S. military forces.

Beginning in 1965, General William Westmoreland, commander of MACV, began to receive a steadily increasing number of American combat troops. Employing these troops in his "pacification" program, Westmoreland instituted two operational approaches focusing on clearing insurgent forces from urban areas and destroying the exposed enemy with a series of conventional military operations.[65] To achieve these goals, Westmoreland's attrition strategy employed large tactical formations and three primary operational concepts; 1) "search and destroy attacks," 2) "clear and hold" operations, and 3) "securing operations."[66] The focuses for these operations were

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commitment to Vietnam and polarized the American opinion against North Vietnam as an aggressor in the region.

[64] Doughty, *Warfare in the Western World*, 912.

[65] George L. MacGarrigle, *Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive, October 1966 to October 1967*, United States Army in Vietnam (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1998), 11-12.

[66] A. J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1942-1976*, Cmh Pub (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History 2006), 368-69.

large-scale, division attacks employing mobility and firepower to destroy enemy formations while preventing friendly casualties. However, the majority of America's efforts aimed at destroying the VC through a war of attrition, as identified in a U.S. Army Chief of Staff-sponsored study called "A Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of Vietnam (PROVN)."[67] This study found that U.S. efforts to secure and protect the Vietnamese population were practically non-existent.

By 1968, U.S. combat forces committed to Vietnam reached 543,000, yet MACV was unable to yet show appreciable effects against the Viet Cong, who continued to operate with impunity across South Vietnam in small, decentralized units.[68] Three years of limited results eroded U.S. popular support for the war and fostered an environment of further doubt and pessimism among U.S. leadership. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara argued that "the war cannot be won by killing North Vietnamese. It can only be won by protecting the South Vietnamese."[69] U.S. counterinsurgent methods, however, continued to focus on destroying the enemy through a direct, more conventional, approach.

Further degrading American confidence, in 1968 the North Vietnamese Army and VC conducted the Tet Offensive, a country-wide campaign which targeted attacks against 36 provincial capitals, five major cities, 64 district capitals, and 50 hamlets.[70] Coming shortly after a

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[67] Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1999), 6.

[68] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 197. Although 543,000 forces were deployed to Vietnam, only approximately 80,000 of that number were combat troops. The remainders of the forces were the logistical and sustainment tail that were required to support the heavy forces being employed.

[69] Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*, 9.

[70] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 239.

report from Westmoreland outlining significant progress in Vietnam, this offensive struck directly at the American public's will to sustain a long war in Southeast Asia. Although the results were catastrophic to the Viet Cong, the Tet Offensive proved that the war in Vietnam was far from finished.[71] The effects of theTet Offensive, combined with increased anti-war sentiment at home, initiated a significant change in policy by President Lyndon Johnson, who rejected further military escalation and pursued options for peace negotiations with the North Vietnamese.[72]

Even though North Vietnamese leaders initially responded to Johnson's offer of peace negotiations, the North Vietnamese remained completely committed to victory in the south, in accordance with their terms, and were prepared to continue the fight to achieve it. To rebuild losses sustained during Tet, the North Vietnamese assumed a strategic defensive and implemented a campaign of guerilla warfare in South Vietnam. Critical to North Vietnamese military success was the rebuilding of the political apparatus and insurgent infrastructure in the south that would prolong the war, target the anti-war demonstrations in the U.S., and facilitate American concessions at the negotiating table.[73] To achieve this, suitable lines of communication became a critical requirement in the North Vietnamese plan for victory and the Ho Chi Minh Trail became the means to this end.

Withdrawal Phase

In 1969, General Creighton Abrams, initially deployed to serve as Westmoreland's deputy, assumed command of the MACV. With Abrams came a significant change to U.S.

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[71] Doughty, *Warfare in the Western World*, 922-26.

[72] Ibid., 925-26.

[73] Ibid., 927.

methods, namely the employment of an "indirect approach" of attacking the North Vietnamese means of sustaining combat and insurgent operations in South Vietnam.[74] The Ho Chi Minh Trail, the historical line of communication that sustained the NVA and VC forces in the South, became a primary focus for American combat operations throughout the remainder of the war. This approach nested well with "Vietnamization," a strategic approach by the new American president, Richard Nixon, to concurrently pursue strategic bombing and peace negotiations, while implementing security force assistance and troop redeployment to quiet anti-war opinion in the U.S. Under this strategy there were two primary objectives; (1) develop the South Vietnamese combat capability, and (2) conduct combat operations that would provide time and space for the gradual redeployment of U.S. forces, while transferring security responsibilities to the South Vietnamese.[75] While huge transfers of American equipment, technology, and military training were committed toward the first objective, Abrams' plan was to leverage the Vietnamese environment and seasonal cycle to facilitate the second, providing time and space for scheduled withdrawal of U.S. forces.[76]

There are two primary considerations associated with the physical environment in the Vietnam War that are significant to these case studies; the weather and the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The primary weather consideration is the southwestern monsoon that occurs in Southeast Asia,

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[74] Shaw, *The Cambodian Campaign: The 1970 Offensive and America's Vietnam War*, 36.

[75] Doughty, *Warfare in the Western World*, 928.

[76] Shaw, *The Cambodian Campaign: The 1970 Offensive and America's Vietnam War*, 39. Shaw describes the ability of a properly timed campaign to delay NVA operations, and thus facilitate Vietnamization, from six to nine months based on weather cycles and impacts.

typically from May to September.[77] This monsoon characteristically involves high winds and torrential rain that limit military operations, transform roads and trails to muddy quagmires, and turns creeks and streams into raging torrents. Due to the drastic effects of the monsoon, the weather not only determined the fighting seasons in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, but more importantly determined when the Ho Chi Minh Trail would be under repair and expansion, or in periods of full operating capacity.

In the spring of 1969, the North Vietnamese lost the use of Sihanoukville Port, one of two primary supply routes into South Vietnam, leaving only the Ho Chi Minh Trail to sustain North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces in South Vietnam.[78] This route, beginning as a patchwork of trails, river routes, and unimproved roads, underwent a massive expansion in 1965 and continued to grow to match the ever increasing North Vietnamese ground war. By the height of the conflict, the trail included over 4,000 miles of roads, rivers, and trails, over 100 way stations, and approximately 20 major base areas along the western border of South Vietnam.[79] Manned, maintained, and operated by a logistical force of over 30,000 men, this line of communication provided a virtual "river of revolutionary forces" to the units fighting in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.[80] It was this vital sustainment pipeline that General Abrams would target in the Cambodian and Laotian campaigns to disrupt the North Vietnamese operations in order to

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[77] Bernard C. Nalty, *The War against Trucks: Aerial Interdiction in Southern Laos, 1968-1972* (Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, United States Air Force, 2005), 4.

[78] Dinh Tho Tran, *The Cambodian Incursion*, Indochina Monographs (Washington: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1979), 21. Dinh discusses the importance of the port while the impacts of the port being closed are discussed in Shaw, *The Cambodian Campaign: The 1970 Offensive and America's Vietnam War*, 104.

[79] Nalty, *The War against Trucks: Aerial Interdiction in Southern Laos, 1968-1972*. For additional information on Base Areas see also Tran, *The Cambodian Incursion*, 23-27.

[80] Nalty, *The War against Trucks: Aerial Interdiction in Southern Laos, 1968-1972*, 5.

provide the space and time for "Vietnamization" and ultimately the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam.

Cambodian Incursion

For over a year, General Abrams had desired to target the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Cambodia and interdict NVA sustainment efforts; however, concerns over international sovereignty prevented the U.S. from pursuing his plan.[81] With the Cambodian regime change in 1970, the opportunity to target the trail finally presented itself.[82] The Cambodian campaign, originally envisioned as a multinational operation between ARVN and U.S. forces, actually began before U.S. forces conducted cross border operations, resulting in a unilateral operation by the ARVN III Corp. The initial operation of 14-17 April, named TOAN THANG 41, was a three regiment attack that penetrated a border area 50 kilometers west of Saigon, named the "Angel's Wing" and targeted Base Area 706 (See Figure 4).[83] This Base Area was a key regional supply base and home of the Ninth VC Division's 271st Infantry Regiment.[84] The attacks met little organized resistance, as the primary VC force had received orders to focus offensive operations against Cambodian forces to the west. Facing only a thin line of guard forces, the ARVN III Corps attack was successful, resulting in 415 enemy troops killed in action (KIA) or captured, and the seizure of 118 weapons, several tons of ammunition, and 99 tons of rice.[85] Of additional significance was a large cache of intelligence documents that provided valuable information on

[81] Shaw, *The Cambodian Campaign: The 1970 Offensive and America's Vietnam War*, 23.

[82] Ibid., 34.

[83] Ibid., 34-35.

[84] Ibid., 34.

[85] Ibid., 35.

the organization and importance of the Ho Chi Minh Trail to the North's war aims, further supporting Abram's intent to interdict the supply route.

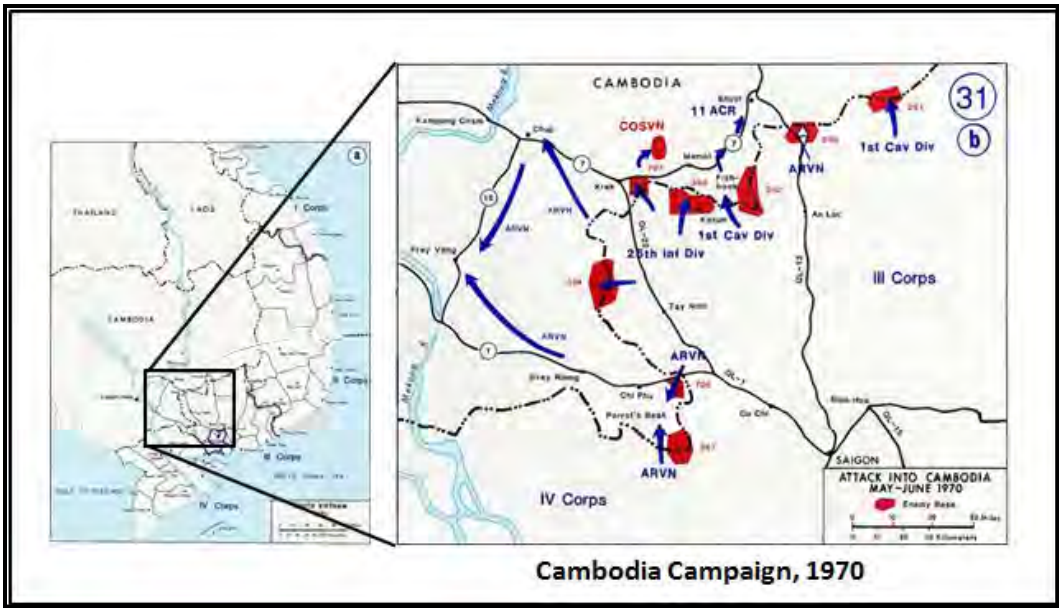

Figure 4: Operations of the Campaign in Cambodia[86]

The success of the initial Cambodian operation generated a sense of confidence in both the U.S. and ARVN leadership. The next operation, still primarily an ARVN-pure attack, was TOAN THANG 42, a four phase operation initiated on 30 April. This attack also targeted the "Angel's Wing" but added supporting attacks into the "Parrot's Beak," an NVA sanctuary approximately 65 kilometers northwest of Saigon.[87] TOAN THANG 42 expanded ARVN's operational reach across the Cambodian border, penetrating up to 25 kilometers west along

[86] Source for map is "Cambodian Campaign," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambodian_Campaign, accessed on 10 December 2012.

[87] Shaw, *The Cambodian Campaign: The 1970 Offensive and America's Vietnam War*, 51-52.

Highway 1.[88] Pursuing an expanded target list, this ARVN operation attacked Base Areas 367 and 706, and included deep raids up to 151 kilometers into Cambodia to rescue Vietnamese refugees trapped by NVA fighting. A change to the operational plan for TOAN THANG 42 added a reinforcing mission into Cambodia, in support of the Cambodian Army fighting the NVA/VC forces on a second front. This added additional depth to the ARVN attack. Mirroring the success of the preceding mission, TOAN THANG 42 not only captured materiel, but also resulted in significant losses of military personnel, estimated at 40 percent of the total NVA military strength for that region. TOAN THANG 42 also interdicted both a large scale NVA offensive, planned for South Vietnam, and an operation targeting the overthrow of the Cambodian government.[89] An additional loss to the NVA, however, was the capture or death of up to 75 percent of its regional and district political cadre; not only a loss of personnel, but also a loss of a specific ideological capability that was difficult and resource intensive to replace. Equipment stores were easy for the North Vietnamese to generate, political leadership was not.

The second phase of the Cambodian Operation, TOAN THANG 43, known to American forces as Operation ROCK CRUSHER, began on 01 May 1970. This assault, conducted by the 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division; 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR); and Third ARVN Airborne Brigade, was a two pronged attack targeting a Cambodian border region known as the "Fishhook" north of Saigon.[90] Beginning with a heavy bombardment from B-52s and tube

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[88] Although the ground forces were ARVN, the U.S. forces provided the majority of all air operations and indirect fire support.

[89] Shaw, *The Cambodian Campaign: The 1970 Offensive and America's Vietnam War*, 55. Enemy materiel losses in this battle amounted to 90 percent of the rice stores, 350 tons of ammunition and an estimated 50 percent of the medical stocks for this NVA region.

[90] Ibid., 70-75.

artillery, the assault began with the insertion of the ARVN Airborne Brigade into three battalion operations areas. The ground assault, attacking along two adjacent axes, moved west to interdict Highway 7, a major NVA supply route, and link up with the ARVN forces. Originally templated to employ an operational area 25 kilometers deep, the nature of the terrain and enemy operations prompted the 11 ACR to advance to the village of Snuol, 35 kilometers into Cambodia. Belatedly informed about the 30 kilometer limit of advance imposed by President Nixon, the 11 ACR Commander withdrew the unit to within the prescribed depth.[91] Succeeding in clearing forces from the operational area, the focus of the mission transitioned to finding and reducing enemy logistic caches. As a result of these clearing operations, U.S. forces found "The City," a huge supply base composed of 182 bunkers housing over 172 tons of weapons, ammunition, food, and clothing. [92] Shaw asserts that the composition of the ammunition stores, including large caliber, 130 mm artillery shells, indicated to MACV leadership that this was a critical supply base planned to support a future enemy escalation.

The results of cross-border operations, thus far, were encouraging to President Nixon. Assessing that he would "take just as much political heat for taking out two sanctuaries as [he] would for taking out six," he decided to expand the scope of the incursion on a broader front and include more forces.[93] Thus began the final phase of the operation, incorporating TOAN THANG 44, involving the 25th Infantry Division, and TOAN THANG 45, involving the remaining elements of the 1st Cavalry Division. The 25th Infantry Division received the mission of

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[91] Ibid., 76.

[92] Ibid., 78. Large caliber artillery was not characteristic of VC operations and was indicative, much as in the Battle of Dien Bien Phu against the French, of preparations for a large scale enemy incursion.

[93] Ibid., 96.

destroying Base Areas 353, 363, and 707, as well as defeating the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN), the district level headquarters commanding operations in South Vietnam.[94] Attacking with two of its organic brigades, the 25th Infantry Division first attacked Base Area 354 and met with limited enemy contact. This operation resulted in the destruction of only a moderate amount of military materiel, but managed to seize 217 tons of rice, before advancing on Base Area 353. The attack on Base Area 353 met with more success, identifying hundreds of small arms weapons, 18 tons of ammunition, 854 tons of rice, and thousands of pounds of documentation and intelligence. The final attack on Base Area 707 identified it as a primary staging area for North Vietnamese personnel movement, but only produced small amounts of enemy equipment as well as 210 tons of rice.[95]

Likewise, 1st Cavalry in TOAN THANG 45 met with significant success in the identification and destruction of Base Areas 350 and 351. In fact, this operation resulted in the biggest find of the campaign, an expansive logistics cache the Americans named "Rock Island East," which stretched for over a kilometer in length and 500 meters in breadth, and contained 326 tons of ammunition and supplies.[96] Shaw assesses that, like "The City," the ammunition types in this cache were significant in that they included more than 1,000 rounds of Soviet D-44 howitzer and tank ammunition, again indicative of planning and preparation for a pending, large scale, NVA offensive.[97]

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[94] Ibid., 108-09.

[95] Ibid., 118.

[96] Ibid., 102.

[97] Ibid., 102.

By 30 June 1970, the date set by President Nixon for complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Cambodia, all American ground forces were back within the Vietnamese border.[98] ARVN forces, however, continued to conduct operations across the Cambodian border interdicting the Ho Chi Minh Trail and supporting the Cambodian fight against North Vietnamese forces. During this campaign a total of 32,000 U.S. and 48,000 South Vietnamese soldiers participated in joint and multinational operations that resulted in over 11,000 enemy killed and 2,300 prisoners of war, the seizure or destruction of approximately 25,000 weapons, 1,700 tons of ammunition, and 6,800 tons of rice, in addition to unrecorded amounts of additional military materiel and medical equipment.[99] Analysis of these results by U.S. military leaders concluded that this loss of personnel and materiel equated to more than a year of rebuilding before North Vietnam could mount large scale operations again in South Vietnam.[100] According to Lieutenant Colonel Nguyen Thanh, a former enemy leaders and North Vietnamese Deputy Commander of the 2nd Sub region Command, the Cambodian campaign preempted the NVA's plan to seize the capital of Cambodia and a planned, large scale invasion of South Vietnam commensurate to the 1968 Tet Offensive.[101] Even more significant, and in part due to the participation and effectiveness of U.S. forces, the ARVN were able to establish a zone of operations 60 kilometers deep into Cambodia, from which they continued combat operations against the NVA until the Paris Peace Accords in

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[98] Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*, 210.

[99] Graham A. Cosmas, *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Withdrawal, 1968-1973*, United States Army in Vietnam (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History For sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. G.P.O., 2007), 302.

[100] Shaw, *The Cambodian Campaign: The 1970 Offensive and America's Vietnam War*, 162.

[101] Lewis Sorley, *The Vietnam War: An Assessment by South Vietnam's Generals*, Modern Southeast Asia Series (Lubbock, Tex.: Texas Tech University Press, 2010), 546.

1973.[102] The South Vietnamese military leadership viewed this as the most significant result of the campaign, as it removed North Vietnamese combat formations from South Vietnamese borders, creating a "disruption of coordination between enemy main, local, and guerrilla forces and between the enemy infrastructure."[103] Ultimately, however, the U.S. had already initiated a full withdrawal from Vietnam under President Nixon's strategy. While the tactical successes derived from this operation achieved the operational objective of providing time and space for redeployment, they became an "ephemeral effect" strategically, and had no effect on the prescribed termination schedule of the war.[104]

Cambodia Case Inquiry

The first question used to assess this case is, did the U.S. and Southern Vietnamese forces employ depth in the Cambodian campaign? The answer to this question is yes, but this answer requires additional understanding. President Nixon established a 30 kilometer limit of advance for all U.S. forces during the Cambodian campaign. In the age of modern, mechanized warfare 30 kilometers is not considered "deep." However, the political situation in Cambodia and Cambodian national sovereignty restricted U.S. forces from conducting operations across the Cambodian border. To maintain sanctuary from U.S. combat capabilities, the North Vietnamese forces established their logistical infrastructure within Cambodia, but within close reach of the Vietnamese border, thus protecting it from attack by U.S. or ARVN ground forces. With the

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[102] Tran, *The Cambodian Incursion*, 127.

[103] Ibid., 175.

[104] Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*, 213.

lifting of the border restriction and the ability to conduct cross-border operations, the U.S. operational reach now brought the Ho Chi Minh Trail and its base areas with striking distance. In essence, the U.S. forces were able to attack deeper than they had previously. In this case, the international restrictions that constrained U.S. and South Vietnamese forces defined the depth that was important for the success of the campaign. Although U.S. forces only achieved a depth of 30 kilometers, this forward position facilitated South Vietnamese operations up to 150 kilometers into Cambodia for an extended period of time. This distance placed them well into the North Vietnamese "rear area" and was of significant impact throughout the duration of the Cambodian operations.

The second question to assess this case is, did the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces incorporate simultaneity into the Cambodian Campaign? MACV was able to achieve simultaneity through a broad attack, employing its major commands of 1st Cavalry Division, 25th Infantry Division, and ARVN forces, concurrently across a wide swath of international border and against a large number of base areas and supply routes. These forces, assigned different objectives and separate areas of operations, prevented the NVA and VC from massing forces or coordinating a synchronized operation to counter U.S. and South Vietnamese goals. Additionally, the U.S. was able to employ simultaneity through its joint operations, incorporating U.S. and Vietnamese air forces to support ground operations while conducting supporting attacks and continuous reconnaissance. The simultaneity of this campaign, both ground and air operations, denied NVA and VC freedom of maneuver, employment of surprise, or seizure of the initiative, resulting in the only available option, withdrawal. Finally, although not controlled by or incorporated into the U.S. plan for Cambodia, the regime change and initiation of conflict between Cambodian forces and the North Vietnamese required the NVA and VC forces to fight on two fronts, one against the border incursion to the east and one against the Cambodian Army to the west. This degraded the NVA's limited combat forces and prevented massing of combat power against either opponent.

Figure 5 presents a visual representation of the simultaneity incorporated into the Toan Thang operations of the Cambodian Campaign.

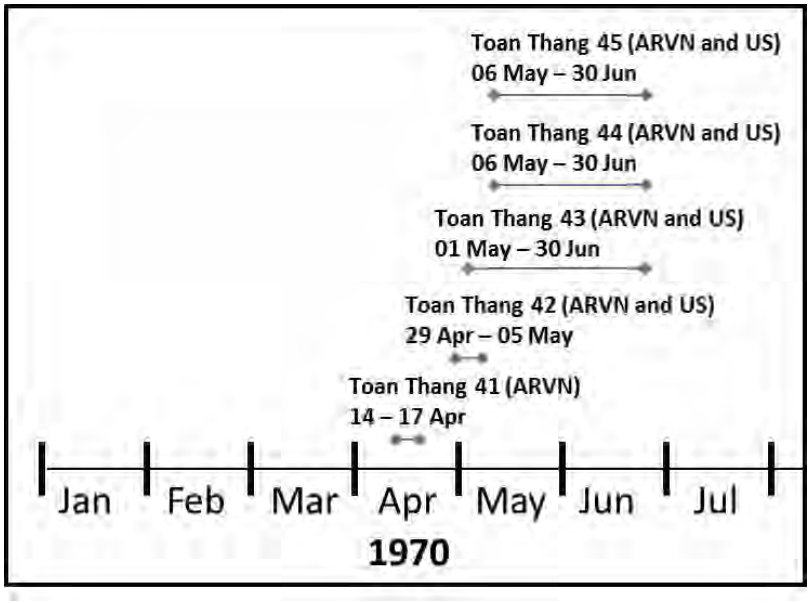

Figure 5: Timelines of Toan Thang Operations in Cambodian campaign, 1970[105]

The third question to assess in this case is, "Did the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces establish or maintain tempo during the Cambodian campaign that retained the initiative and degraded the capabilities of the NVA?" The answer to this question is yes. Upon commitment, each unit participating in this operation, whether U.S. or South Vietnamese, remained in the field conducting combat operations until ordered to redeploy back across the border. Initially attacking to destroy NVA forces, and upon reaching the limit of advance or clearing tactical objectives,

[105] Shaw, *The Cambodian Campaign: The 1970 Offensive and America's Vietnam War*, 34, 44, 52,69-79, and 97-101. While the dates and organizations of the campaign come from Shaw, the construct of the figure are the construction of this paper's author. The timelines for the subordinate operations of this campaign are represented horizontally, which elucidates the simultaneity and tempo inherent in the campaign.

combat formations immediately transitioned to search operations identifying and destroying logistical caches. The tempo of these multiple operations is visually apparent in Figure 5. The continuous tempo of this campaign was in stark contrast to the operations conducted under General Westmoreland, where "search and destroy missions" would sweep through objectives before quickly withdrawing back to centralized bases, regardless of the level of enemy contact. Maintaining a continuous tempo prevented the NVA from repositioning to avoid detection, withdrawing personnel or material out of U.S. and South Vietnamese reach, or establishing a formidable defense out of contact. Additionally, in accordance with Robert Leonhard's definition of tempo in relation to enemy forces, the Cambodian campaign employed a rapid, continuous frequency of operations against the enemy force's frequency, which focused on consolidation and preparation for future operations.[106] The NVA forces were never able to adapt to the tempo of operations in Cambodia.

The fourth question assessed through analysis of the Cambodian campaign is, did the U.S. and South Vietnam forces seize or retain the initiative as a result of the campaign? The answer to this question is yes. The opening of the border to operations within Cambodia allowed the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces to seize the initiative. As exhibited by the tremendous amount of equipment captured during the operation and the displacement of the COSVN, the North Vietnamese forces were not prepared for an invasion into what had been a sanctuary, up to 1970. Lack of a coherent defensive plan and massive loss of equipment and critical intelligence indicate that the initiative, which as the aggressor originally belonged to the North Vietnamese forces, now belonged to its opponents. The operational depth and the length of time that South

[106] Leonhard, *Fighting by Minutes: Time and the Art of War*, 69.

Vietnamese forces operated in Cambodia, after the U.S. withdrawal on 30 Jun 1970, indicate that it took the North Vietnamese forces considerable time to recover from the invasion and to regain the initiative.

The final assessment question is, did the campaign degrade NVA and VC capabilities and achieve the desired operational effects? The answer to this question is, again, yes. The losses incurred by North Vietnam in Cambodia had immediate effects within South Vietnam, which experienced a significant drop in enemy activity, improved internal security, and significant progress toward regional pacification.[107] An important measure of effectiveness of the campaign is the ability of the South Vietnamese forces to successfully pursue conventional combat operations unilaterally, across extended distances and against conventional NVA forces, after the withdrawal of U.S. force into South Vietnam on 30 Jun 1970. Not only could the ARVN perform successfully, but their successes provided the time and space for the pursuit of further training and fielding under the "Vietnamization" plan and the ongoing redeployment of U.S. forces.

In summary, the Cambodian campaign successfully employed depth, simultaneity, and tempo, to seize and retain the initiative and achieve the desired operational effects. The effects created by these tenets reduced potential counter operations and amplified the impacts of the MACV campaign. The North Vietnamese forces, now fighting a two-front war, were not prepared or equipped to counter the depth and tempo of operations in Cambodia, which had a significant impact on their ability to resurrect the insurgency in South Vietnam.

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[107] Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*, 213. Sir Robert Thompson, British counterinsurgency expert and longtime supporter of a counterinsurgent approach in South Vietnam, noted many of the advancements and successes resulting from the Cambodian campaign. Having disagreed with previous U.S. strategies in South Vietnam, Thompson's opinion and observations add significant weight to the argument that the Cambodian campaign was instrumental in improving the security situation in South Vietnam in 1970-71.

Campaign in Laos

Following operations in Cambodia, anti-war sentiment in America increased, further complicating the political dialogue over Vietnam. As a result of this increased controversy and additional budgetary concerns, the Cooper-Church amendment to the defense appropriations bill passed, and denied funding for U.S. ground force operations in Cambodia or Laos.[108] In essence, this amendment ended all overt ground operations across international borders associated with the Vietnam War, relinquishing security of the cross border sanctuaries back to North Vietnamese forces. Concurrently, however, senior military planners in Washington were concerned over intelligence indicating increased logistics and personnel movements in southern Laos warning of an NVA offensive in the coming year. Restricted from using U.S. forces in a direct role, and prompted by President Nixon and his National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, the Pentagon instructed General Abrams to develop a corps-level operation, using only ARVN ground forces to interdict the operations across the border in Laos.[109] Although he believed an operation of this magnitude exceeded the capabilities of the ARVN, General Abrams developed the plan that became Operation LAM SON 719, scheduled for execution in Laos in February 1971.

Since 1960, U.S. forces had conducted aerial interdiction and limited covert operations against the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. The resolve and elusiveness of the enemy and the density of cover in the jungle prevented the American efforts from impeding the flow of men and supplies. Abrams' campaign into Laos would remedy this with a significantly different approach.

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[108] Ibid., 228.

[109] Ibid., 230.

LAM SON 719 aimed to employ large conventional forces, where smaller organizations had failed.

The concept for LAM SON 719 was a South Vietnamese combined air and ground attack to the city of Tchepone, a central hub of several tributaries of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the suspected location of a large enemy force (See Figure 6). Armored forces would attack along Route 9 toward Tchepone, while the ARVN Airborne Division, 1st Infantry Division, and an ARVN Ranger Group conducted aerial insertions to establish firebases on the north and south flanks of the route, protecting the armored attack.[110] The ARVN Marine Division became the campaign's reserve. Concurrent with the ground assault, the U.S. 7th Air Force would continue interdiction operations against the Ho Chi Minh Trail to unhinge defensive positions and target repositioning forces. The objectives for the operation were to interdict the logistic supply lines, and find and destroy materiel caches. The intent was to conduct an extended operation, lasting until the onset of the monsoon season, thus denying the NVA the ability to repair the infrastructure and reestablish the base area before weather forced a halt to military operations.

[110] Ibid., 244-45.

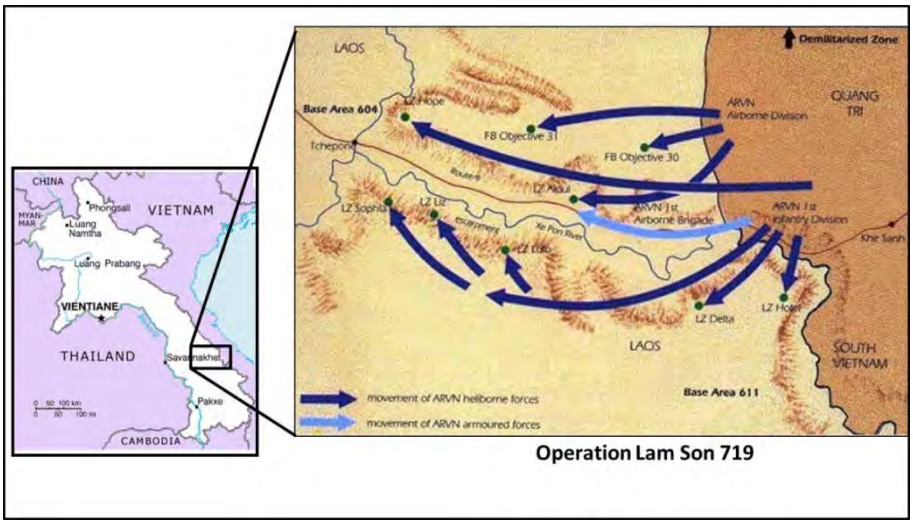

Figure 6: Map of Operation Lam Son 719[111]

The South Vietnamese order of battle for the campaign consisted of the country's best troops, the ARVN 1st Infantry Division, the Airborne Division, the Marine Division, the 1st Armored Brigade Task Force, and a Ranger group.[112] U.S. forces would clear the way to the Laotian border, but would not cross, keeping open the lines of communication that would support the South Vietnamese attack. All cross-border objectives would belong to the South Vietnamese. The enemy forces assessment forecasted up to 60,000 troops in the region, organized into five divisions, two infantry regiments, eight artillery regiments, three tank battalions, and associated support forces.[113] General Abrams viewed speed and execution as essential to the success of this operation, not just quickly penetrating the enemy defenses before they could react, but also to

[111] Source of Operation LAM SON 719 map is "Lam Son 719," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Lam_Son_719 , accessed on 04 January 2012.

[112] Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*, 244.

[113] Ibid., 243.

maximize the ability to support the operation with air forces, which faced the risk of grounding by quickly approaching adverse weather.

On 08 Feb 1971, the South Vietnamese crossed the border of Laos. By 10 February, lead elements of the assault had penetrated 20 kilometers into Laos and linked up with an ARVN airborne battalion in the village of A Loui, approximately half the distance to Tchepone.[114] By 12 Feb 1970, the South Vietnamese armored force encountered increasing enemy contact, making little headway past A Loui, and the advance ground to a halt. On the northern flank of the highway, NVA formations of increasing size attacked South Vietnamese flank positions, pushing ARVN Rangers and infantry units from their firebases. U.S. Air Force and helicopter gunship strikes in support of the fixed bases resulted in over 600 enemy deaths in one battle, but could not stop the counter attacks.[115] The Air Force was equally as deadly against NVA armored formations, destroying or damaging an estimated 98 tanks. [116] However, due to the density of the jungle, this campaign would be won on the ground, and the South Vietnamese were the only forces that could do it.

By 27 Feb 1970, poor terrain and heavy enemy contact halted the armored assault well short of the Tchepone objective and involved intense fighting along the length of the axis. This prevented the South Vietnamese from securing Route 9, the primary axis of the attack and a critical line of communication. South Vietnam changed the plan on March 6th, air assaulting two battalions of ARVN infantry into the outskirts of Tchepone and into the midst of Base Area 604. Based on the limited size of the ARVN force and the lack of direct support, these battalions

[114] Ibid., 247.

[115] Ibid., 248.

[116] Ibid., 249.

focused only on defense, and did very little to impact Base Area 604 or North Vietnamese operations in the vicinity of Tchepone.

At this point in the campaign, General Abrams' assessment of the situation concluded that success for this mission would require an extension of the attack to sever Route 914, an ancillary supply route. This additional objective would expand the focus of the operation and inject simultaneity, requiring the North Vietnamese to defend a broader front and multiple routes. This expansion required the commitment of additional forces and would force the NVA into a decisive battle – Abram's recommendation was to employ the 2nd ARVN Division.[117] Although this recommendation came with the concurrence of General Vien, the South Vietnamese Chief of the Joint General Staff, South Vietnamese President Thieu, and his other senior military commanders, believed the mission had accomplished its goals through the presence of South Vietnamese forces in Tchepone.

On 9 Mar 1970, President Thieu decided to terminate the offensive and withdrawal the forces from Vietnam, despite continuous recommendations from U.S. leadership to reinforce the effort. By 18 Mar 1970, the South Vietnamese were conducting a fighting withdrawal as the NVA attempted to encircle and isolate the ARVN forces. Blanketed by U.S. air strikes, the NVA sustained severe losses, but maintained constant pressure on the South Vietnamese.[118] By 25 Mar 1970, the majority of forces crossed the border back into South Vietnam. Later assessments of the operation concluded that the North Vietnamese sustained significant losses totaling

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[117] Ibid., 254.

[118] Ibid., 256. During the course of the operation, the U.S. Air Force conducted 1,280 B-52 sorties, averaging approximately 30 a day. Additionally, over 8,000 tactical attack sorties were conducted in direct support of ground forces, averaging approximately 150 sorties per day.

approximately 16 of 33 maneuver battalions destroyed, 75 of an estimated 110 tanks destroyed, and over 13,000 killed in action. In addition to the physical losses, reports from international contacts indicated that LAM SON 719 was responsible for a loss of North Vietnamese morale and disappointment among the governmental and military leaders in North Vietnam.[119]

Laos Case Inquiry

This assessment will analyze the Laotian campaign employing the same construct of questions used to assess operations in Cambodia. The first question is, did the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces employ depth in the campaign in Laos? The answer to this question is no. The original plan for this operation called for a large mechanized force to quickly penetrate up to 45 kilometers, thus seizing the initiative and attacking the enemy at points of concentration. Tchepone, and the surrounding Base Area 604, served as the primary objective for this attack. Unlike the Cambodian campaign, where a 45 kilometer depth extended into the North Vietnamese rear area, this depth did not offer the same level of exposure of North Vietnamese formations in Laos. Regardless, the South Vietnamese didn't reach 45 kilometers, as enemy contact and the broken and restrictive terrain along Route 9 mired the armored assault in the vicinity of A Loui, achieving only about half the penetration distance outlined in the plan. This loss of mobility allowed the NVA to locate the force, consolidate combat power, and attack the South Vietnamese, further retarding the advance. Although, the South Vietnamese did eventually get light infantry forces to Tchepone by air assault, they did not possess the firepower and survivability to conduct clearing operations against the strong NVA formations and base area,

[119] Ibid., 262.

ultimately failing to achieve the campaign objective for the region. Major General Nguyen Duy Hinh, Deputy Commander of South Vietnam's IV Corps, states the ARVN effort transitioned from an operation to destroy the NVA logistical system to one "directed at setting foot in Tchepone."[120] In retrospect, the planning that preceded this campaign did not consider the possibility of Route 9 being impassable and developed no options or contingencies enabling combat formation to achieve the required depth expediently.

The second question to assess in this case is, did the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces incorporate simultaneity into the campaign into Laos? The answer to this question is both yes and no. Addressing the yes, the campaign employed both the South Vietnamese ground force operations and a continuation of the U.S. Air Force interdiction efforts against the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Operationally, this set the conditions for better results for the Air Force, as the South Vietnamese assault prompted a repositioning of NVA forces in the region, either withdrawing from the incursion or repositioning to attack it. This increased enemy exposure and improved Air Force targeting capabilities against enemy formations, supplies, and bases. The negative answer to the question, however, had greater impact on the South Vietnamese mission. A comparison of Figure 7, the timeline of the Laos campaign, to Figure 5 reveals the lack of simultaneity.

[120] Sorley, *The Vietnam War: An Assessment by South Vietnam's Generals*, 579.

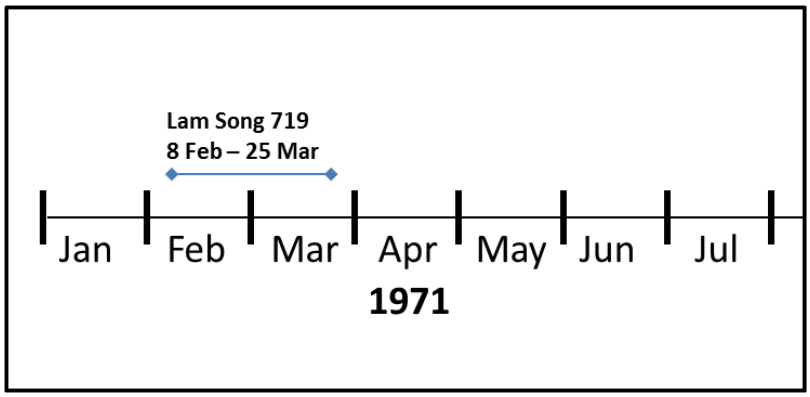

Figure 7: Timeline of Operation LAM SON 719, Laos, 1971[121]

Although the South Vietnamese involved several shaping operations within the campaign, including the establishment of firebases to secure exposed flanks, all of the separate operations were oriented on a single axis of attack against the same objective area. Lacking unit dispersion or multiple objectives to control the formation, this single axis of attack allowed the NVA to employ mass in their counter attacks and allowed enemy formations to attack the South Vietnamese along exterior lines from multiple directions. Efforts by General Abrams to recommend changes to the original plan, specifically an attack to interdict Route 914 and the potential commitment of the 2nd ARVN Division, could have induced increased simultaneity into the campaign. The South Vietnamese strategic leaders ignored these recommendations, however, and the opportunity passed. Ultimately, the single axis of attack and lack of simultaneity limited the capability of the South Vietnamese to disperse, and localized the enemy's ability to counter the South Vietnamese objectives.

[121] Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*, 244 and 59. The dates in this figure come from Sorley's book. The author of this paper created the construct of the figure.

The third question to assess this case is, did the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces establish or maintain tempo, during the campaign in Laos? The answer to this question is no. Due to the stymied advance and the limited success in penetrating towards the primary objective, the South Vietnamese were subject to the enemy's desired tempo, as opposed to employing their own. Although the tempo of engagements was initially moderate, as the NVA assessed the South Vietnamese capabilities and generated combat power, it quickened to a pace of virtually continuous engagement across the length and breadth of the South Vietnamese formation. This sustained level of enemy attack denied the South Vietnamese the time to conduct any operations other than defense, as the "enemy had thrown into combat almost all of his reserve forces."[122] The tempo of the North Vietnamese attacks further exasperated South Vietnamese efforts to reach Tchepone and degraded the combat power available to commit toward search operations targeting materiel cache sites.

According to the original timeline for the campaign, military operations would end with the beginning of the monsoon season. However, Major General Nguyen Duy Hinh states, "Operation LAM SON 719 was terminated unexpectedly and in haste."[123] President Thieu's decision for early termination surrendered this objective and allowed the NVA sufficient time to restock and replace losses before the weather window closed. This invalidated the timing of the operation and the planned effects that the monsoon weather would have on North Vietnamese efforts to rebuild and refit.

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[122] Sorley, *The Vietnam War: An Assessment by South Vietnam's Generals*, 605.

[123] Ibid., 595.

While there were examples of high tempo at the tactical level, specifically the continuous support and reinforcement of the U.S. air support, these efforts were ancillary and unable to accomplish the campaign's objectives.[124] In essence, the loss of mobility sacrificed the planned tempo of the South Vietnamese operation, ceding the initiative to the enemy, and exposed the ARVN forces to the battle rhythm of the NVA. The South Vietnamese were never able to reestablish their tempo.

The fourth question in the assessment of the campaign in Laos is, did the South Vietnam forces seize or retain the initiative as a result of the campaign? The answer to this question is simply – no. While the South Vietnamese could have temporarily seized the initiative with the surprise of the initial strike into Laos, the stagnated advance quickly surrendered any surprise the South Vietnamese had generated. The single axis of attack, lack of suitable routes to the primary objectives, and inability to progress past A Loui provided the North Vietnamese with the time to consolidate and reposition forces to blunt the attack. By ignoring Abram's advice to employ lateral routes, add additional objectives, and reignite the operation, the South Vietnamese abrogated any opportunity to retake or sustain the initiative. Despite the small aerial incursion by the ARVN into Tchepone, the North Vietnamese dictated the tempo of the remainder of the campaign. As a result, while South Vietnam could claim to have accomplished the objective of reaching Tchepone, the force size was too small to have any significant effect on the base area and failed to achieve the objectives of the operation.

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[124] Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*, 250. In fact, the high tempo of U.S. air operations had a nearly catastrophic effect on men and material. For the logistical strain on the readiness of the helicopter and fixed wing units, see Sorley's discussion of airframe readiness and the strain of continuous operations on pages 250-254.

The final question to assess the campaign in Laos is, did the campaign degrade NVA and VC capabilities and achieve the desired operational effects? The answer to this question is, again, both yes and no. The tactical abilities of the South Vietnamese forces exacted a heavy toll on the North Vietnamese committed toward the counter attack, the equivalent of two North Vietnamese divisions.[125] Much as in Cambodia, there was a significant reduction of insurgent attacks in South Vietnam following the completion of the campaign in Laos.[126] Additional results of the operation, which surfaced later, benefited the South Vietnamese in the conflict, namely an increase in North Vietnamese desertion and a significant drop in the morale of front line troops.[127] Looking back on the campaign, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger believed that Laos, in addition to the Cambodian campaign, allowed the South Vietnamese to survive the North Vietnamese Easter Offensive of 1972, stating "the campaigns of 1970 and 1971, in my view, saved us in 1972."[128] The objectives that the campaign did not achieve were the destruction of Base Area 604, securing of Route 9, and the sustainment of the operation until the monsoon season, which would have exacerbated the North Vietnamese efforts to recuperate. These objectives would have, essentially, destroyed the NVA logistical system in the region. These same objectives, had they been achieved, would have provided further time and space for the execution of U.S. strategies in South Vietnam.

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[125] Ibid., 262.

[126] Ibid., 266.

[127] Tran, *The Cambodian Incursion*, 175.

[128] Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*, 265. For more on the Easter Offensive, see Allan Reed Millett, *A Short History of the Vietnam War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 35.

In summary, the South Vietnamese attack into Laos failed to employ sufficient depth, simultaneity, tempo, and initiative, thus enabling the North Vietnamese to counter the attack. Although the South Vietnamese operation was successful in significantly degrading the NVA's capabilities, through attrition of manpower and equipment, it failed to achieve the operational level effects that constituted its primary goal, the defeat of Base Area 604, the seizure of Tchepone, and the complete interdiction of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the region.

Analysis and Implications

A review of the results of the two case studies, with a correlation of the tenets of depth, simultaneity, tempo, and initiative to mission success, provides clear insight into their importance. As detailed below in Figure 8, the Cambodian campaign proved the more effective campaign to achieve the operational requirements of additional time and space. Although both campaigns planned to employ all four tenets, only the one in Cambodia fully achieved them.

Criteria	Cambodia	Why	Laos	Why
Did the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces employ depth in the campaign?	**Yes**	U.S. forces extended 30 kilometers into Cambodia displacing the COSVN Headquarters and interdicting the Ho Chi Minh Trail.	**No**	South Vietnamese forces penetrated 30 kilometers into Laos but were unable to destroy Base Area 604 or interdict the Ho Chi Minh Trail.
Did the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces incorporate simultaneity into the campaign?	**Yes**	U.S and South Vietnamese forces employed simultaneity, attacking different locations and units on different timelines.	**Mixed**	Incorporated air and ground attaccks, but along a single axis of advance with a consolidated mechanized formation. Once halted, were unable to continue the attack.
Did the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces establish or maintain tempo during the campaign?	**Yes**	U.S and South Vietnamese forces sustained a continuous tempo throughout the operation transitioning easily from combat operations to search and seizure operations.	**No**	South Vietnamese forces tempo came to a complete halt at A Loui. For the remainder of the campaign they reacted to the North Vietnamese tempo of attacks.
Did the U.S. and South Vietnam forces seize or retain the initiative as a result of the campaign?	**Yes**	MAC-V retained the initiative throughout the campaign by altering the focus and locations of operations, sustaining pressure on NVA forces, and continuous offensive operations.	**No**	ARVN forces failed to retain the initiative gained by the initial cross-border attack. After recovering, the NVA dictated the conduct of the campaign throughout its duration.
Did the campaign degrade NVA and VC capabilities and achieve the desired operational effects?	**Yes**	The Cambodian campaign achieved operational effects both in attrition of enemy combat power and in dislocation of enemy command and control.	**Mixed**	The Laotian campaign attrited significant enemy combat power, but failed to disrupt command and control capabilities or enemy resupply capabilities.

Figure 8: Campaign Comparisons

At this point, it is important to review the strategic and operational environment of Vietnam to extract the implications of these two campaigns. With anti-war sentiment increasing at home, the MACV was struggling to successfully train, develop, and field an effective South

Vietnamese military. Tied to this capability was the requirement to quickly transfer security responsibility to host nation forces to facilitate U.S. redeployment and extract the U.S. from a long and costly war. The key to the accomplishment of these goals was the ability to create a semi-permissive security environment in South Vietnam that would not over burden the growing South Vietnamese military, and would enable a reduced U.S. military commitment. The means to do this was to degrade enemy capabilities, not just for the present, but extending the time and space of diminished capacity, setting conditions for strategic success.

Comparing the two case studies, it's clear that depth in military operations is relative. Although both the U.S. operations in Cambodia and the South Vietnamese operations in Laos achieved a similar depth, 25-30 kilometers, the effect of the depth was relative to the objectives of the operation. Thirty kilometers extended into the enemy's rear and support areas in Cambodia, while in Laos it merely extended into the enemy's primary battle zone. Based on the failure to attack multiple echelons of the enemy, as in Cambodia, the Laotian campaign resulted in more of a frontal attack than a deep penetration.[129] The lack of relative depth, likewise, negated the employment of simultaneity.

Unable to engage multiple echelons of enemy forces concurrently, the Laotian campaign could neither prevent the consolidation and massing of a coherent, North Vietnamese defense, nor induce the operational shock, that is critical to the breakdown of an opposing system.[130] In

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[129] The multiple echelons discussed here relates to operations targeting tactical line units as well as operational headquarters. The Cambodian operation displaced the COSVN headquarters, affecting NVA operations throughout the region, whereas the Laotian campaign never achieved an equivalent operational effect.

[130] The multiple echelons of the Cambodian campaign, referred to in this paragraph, are composed of the tactical units, Base Area support units, C2 organizations like the COSVN, and the infrastructure of

contrast, engaging the enemy throughout its depth and breadth in Cambodia paralyzed the North Vietnamese operationally. Depth provided the opportunity for simultaneity in both campaigns, but only the operation in Cambodia employed it.

As much as depth facilitated simultaneity, simultaneity determined which force had the initiative. Constantly reacting to a myriad of attacks against different units and in different locations, the North Vietnamese ceded and never regained the initiative in Cambodia. In Laos, a consolidated enemy, on limited routes and singly focused, allowed the North Vietnamese to formulate a concerted and synchronized defensive effort. This allowed the NVA to capture and retain the initiative from the South Vietnamese. The limited gains toward Laotian campaign objectives, overall, indicate the importance of sustaining the initiative throughout an operation.

In summary, without the incorporation of depth (to reach the Ho Chi Minh Trail and its surrounding base camps); simultaneity (to leverage and divide the efforts of North Vietnamese forces along the LOC); and tempo (to sustain a frequency of combat that the North Vietnamese could not sustain) the U.S. and South Vietnamese operations would fail to achieve the level of effectiveness required to create significant and lasting effects in support of the U.S. strategic withdrawal in Vietnam. Although the campaign in Laos employed limited elements of depth and simultaneity, resulting in the accomplishment of some positive effects, the full incorporation of the tenets, as witnessed in the Cambodian campaign, would have multiplied the results and

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the Ho Chi Minh Trail. For an understanding of Operational Shock see, Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory*, 41.

further degraded the North Vietnamese capability to conduct future military operations in South Vietnam.

Summary

As explained earlier in this work, development and proficiency of host nation forces is the means to long term security within nations battling insurgencies. Given this fact, training and development missions in these same nations are critical in achieving success during counterinsurgent operations. In the preceding pages, this work endeavored to answer how depth, simultaneity, and tempo can be employed against insurgent organizations to gain the time and space required to train host nation security forces. By broadening the definitions and intents of these terms, beyond those presented in doctrine, this paper assessed their application during two Vietnam War campaigns. Successful employment was measured through two criteria; the ability to seize and retain the initiative, and the achievement of operational effects in the theater. Analysis revealed that the incorporation of these tenets into the campaign was not sufficient, in itself, to optimize the achievement of operational effects; the relativity of the tenets contingent to both the environment and actors were equally as important.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis addressed in this study states that military operations employing the elements of depth, simultaneity, and tempo, enable counterinsurgent forces to disrupt the tempo of insurgent operations, thus providing time and space for the training, development, and fielding of host nation security forces. This study asserts that depth, simultaneity, and tempo are critical considerations for analysis and employment in both conventional and counterinsurgent operations. Evaluation of the two campaigns, Cambodia and Laos, reflect different achievement of outcomes. Cambodia supports the hypothesis outright. The Laos case study supports the hypothesis, through the failure to successfully incorporate depth, simultaneity, and tempo. While

campaigns may be determined successful with moderate or limited employment of each tenet, maximizing their effectiveness requires their incorporation in relation to the operational environment.

Criteria Support to Hypothesis		
Criteria	**Cambodia**	**Laos**
Did the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces employ depth in the campaign?	**Supported**	**Not Supported**
Did the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces incorporate simultaneity into the campaign?	**Supported**	**Mixed**
Did the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces establish or maintain tempo during the campaign	**Supported**	**Not Supported**
Did the U.S. and South Vietnam forces seize or retain the initiative as a result of the campaign?	**Supported**	**Not Supported**
Did the campaign degrade NVA and VC capabilities and achieve the desired operational effects?	**Supported**	**Mixed**

Figure 9: Summary of Findings from Case Study

Findings and Conclusion

This study's hypothesis asserts that depth, planned and employed in a counterinsurgent campaign, creates time and space for host nation security force development. Operations involving depth are relative to the distance, time, and structural considerations of the enemy force. Over and above the destruction and capture of large amounts of personnel and materiel, the campaign in Cambodia truly achieved depth through the disintegration and displacement of the COSVN, the NVA command and control structure. Although only reaching an average depth of 30 kilometers, the U.S. and South Vietnamese operations decimated the NVA ability to command

and control a counter the attack, preventing them from overcoming the time and space issues necessary to counter effectively.[131] The Laotian campaign achieved a similar depth, but failed to have significant effects on the NVA force. In this campaign, the NVA were able to build and consolidate combat power in a way that provided a coordinated response and mitigated the full operational effects of the South Vietnamese incursion. These two campaigns, and the levels of operational effectiveness achieved, elucidate the deeper definition and aspects of depth in military operational planning. The evidence from the two case studies provides a mixed outcome that highlights the importance of relativity when employing depth (See Figure 9).

This study's hypothesis asserts that simultaneity, planned and employed in a counterinsurgent campaign, creates time and space for host nation security force development. Like depth, simultaneity also requires consideration relative to the environment, in order to maximize operational effects. In the Cambodian campaign, MACV achieved simultaneity at the operational level through concurrent operations by separate units, across the breadth and depth of the battlespace. At the strategic level, the NVA inadvertently amplified the effects of simultaneity by opening of a second front against the Cambodian Army. This strategic simultaneity further degraded the NVA's ability to counter the U.S. and South Vietnamese offensives. In Laos, however, the NVA faced a single ground force in a localized area of operations. With the exception of air power employment, which lacked decisive effect, the operation achieved only a marginal level of simultaneity and failed to accomplish the level of operational effects that were possible. As reflected in these two cases, effectiveness of simultaneity is relative to the actors and

[131] Shaw, *The Cambodian Campaign: The 1970 Offensive and America's Vietnam War*, 131. Not only did the Cambodian campaign disintegrate the ability to for the NVA to defend its line of communication, but it also prevented organized attacks into Saigon or the surrounding South Vietnamese provinces.

operations engaged within the theater environment. The evidence from the two case studies provides a mixed outcome that highlights the importance of relativity when employing simultaneity (See Figure 9).

This study's hypothesis asserts that tempo, planned and employed in a counterinsurgent campaign, creates time and space for host nation security force development. This final finding identified that tempo proved most effective in operational employment when considered in relation to the rhythm of friendly and enemy forces. During the Cambodian campaign, the NVA focused on the reestablishment of insurgent forces within the borders of South Vietnam, an operation of slower tempo and reduced rhythm. These forces were unprepared for the tempo of continuous U.S. and South Vietnamese operations in their rear areas, resulting in the inability to adjust, retain the initiative, or counter the attacks. During the Laotian campaign, however, the NVA were preparing for future conventional operations and quickly adjusted their tempo of operations to match, and ultimately exceed, the tempo of the attacking South Vietnamese forces. In this campaign, the NVA were able to counter and then stall the South Vietnamese attacks before transitioning from a defensive to an offensive posture, thus seizing back the initiative lost during the initial cross border operation. The evidence from the two case studies provides a mixed outcome that highlights the importance of relativity when employing tempo (See Figure 9).

As identified in the case studies, the critical requirement is not just the incorporation of these tenets into planning and execution, but more importantly, the identification and comprehension of their characteristics as they apply to a given set of conditions, allowing a campaign to leverage and maximize their employment. The dependency of these tenets, relative to the enemy and operational environment, require commanders and planners to develop a complete and comprehensive visualization and understanding before proceeding to detailed planning. Although this is difficult, at best, given the complexity of counterinsurgency

operations, these historical cases from Vietnam clearly highlight the disparity of operational effectiveness, contingent on proper employment, and validate the effort required to attain it.

Method Issues

Although the lessons gleaned from an in-depth analysis of these case studies provides background that supports the critical importance of depth, simultaneity, and tempo, in both counterinsurgent and conventional operations, there are factors in these cases that are contingent on operational context. Both of these cases occurred during the Vietnam War, a period where proxy wars existed as both a means of containment and a deterrent to escalation in the Cold War. The predominant actors in the Cambodian and Laotian campaigns, the U.S., the Republic of South Vietnam, and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, were legitimate states, all of whom employed standardized doctrine. Future combat and security operations involve significant, potential differences from the case studies presented here due to the unorthodox and non-doctrinal methods of non-state actors. Although both instances would likely conform in areas such as the employment of transnational sanctuary and population-centered operations, other aspects, such as complex, cellular command structures inherent in terrorist organizations, could differ significantly and impact the success and employment of depth, simultaneity, and tempo. As determined through the analysis of the historical case studies, the effectiveness of these tenets is contingent on the conditions in which counterinsurgents employ them, relative to the enemy organization and orientation and the environment. As with all doctrine, however, effective employment in a historical instance is not indicative of effectiveness in all cases.

Policy Implications

Strategic leaders have assessed that the complex security environment of today will extend for the foreseeable future, presenting our nation, and its allies, with an "array of diverse security challenges" and a host of violent, extremist organizations as potential opponents.[132] The United States must be prepared to face and overcome the challenges present in these complex security environments, namely those of counterinsurgency and transnational terrorism. Thus, it falls to strategic and operational planners to develop the comprehensive approaches that will equip our forces to counter these complex threats. Using our current doctrine and focusing on lessons learned from the past, our military can adapt to rather than recreate the ways and means used to achieve our national objectives.

Future Research

Although this study has attempted to clarify the importance and relevance of our doctrine relative to counterinsurgency operations, there are aspects of the present and future strategic environment that require additional study and research. The U.S. was able to conduct the Cambodian campaign due only to the fracture of Cambodian and North Vietnamese relations and the opening of the Cambodian border to military operations. For the future, the Department of Defense needs to study the characteristics of transnational sanctuary and, in conjunction with other governmental agencies, identify a means to mitigate its employment in support of and by hostile forces. By dealing with definitions pertaining to, as well as, applications of national

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[132] John M. McHugh, and George W. Casey, Jr, "A Statement on the Posture of the United States Army 2010," United States Army, http://secureweb2.hqda.pentagon.mil/VDAS_ArmyPostureStatement/2010/2010_army_posture_statement.pdf, accessed on 11 November 2011.

sovereignty, this problem enters the realm of strategic policy and diplomacy which exceeds the scope of this study.

Additionally, in light of recent strategic guidance highlighting budgetary crisis and future reductions, fiscal constraints may degrade the capability of joint operations within the U.S. military to achieve depth, simultaneity, and tempo in future operations. In General Martin Dempsey's words, future military success requires, "interdependence—Services that rely on each other to achieve objectives and create capabilities that do not exist, except when combined."[133] This mandated interdependency requires additional study to identify complementary resources and capabilities, from across all services of the Department of Defense, that when synchronized, will expand the services' ability to create depth, simultaneity, and tempo on any battlefield and in any potential environment.

[133] Martin E. Dempsey, "Chairman's Strategic Guidance to the Joint Force," Department of the Army, http://www.jcs.mil/content/files/2012-02/020312135111_CJCS_Strategic_Direction_to_the_Joint_Force_6_Feb_2012.pdf , accessed on 24 February 2012.

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